

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS) prepared this Draft Resource Management Plan (DRMP) and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Arizona Strip Field Office (Arizona Strip FO), Vermilion Cliffs National Monument (Vermilion), and BLM portion of Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument (Parashant) and a Draft General Management Plan (DGMP) and DEIS for the NPS portion of Parashant. This document is referred to as the Draft Plan/DEIS and provides direction for managing three distinct planning areas: Parashant, Vermilion, and the Arizona Strip FO. Combined, these three planning areas are referred to as the Planning Area or Arizona Strip District. This Draft Plan/DEIS analyzes the environmental effects resulting from implementation of the No Action Alternative and four action alternatives proposed for managing the Planning Area.

The Arizona Strip District and the Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) portion of Parashant have local jurisdiction over their respective lands within the Planning Area. Combined, the three planning areas comprise 2,768,176 acres of BLM-administered land (BLM lands) and 208,453 acres of NPS lands within the Arizona Strip, which encompasses the northern portions of Coconino and Mohave counties, Arizona, north and west of the Colorado River. In addition, the Planning Area also encloses 206,809 acres of Arizona State lands, 139,612 acres of private lands, and 41 acres of U.S. Forest Service lands; however, this Draft Plan/DEIS only covers decisions for BLM and NPS lands within the Planning Area.

While largely remote and sparsely inhabited, the Planning Area encompasses a number of small communities in extreme northern Arizona, including Fredonia, Marble Canyon, Colorado City, Centennial, Littlefield, Beaver Dam, and Scenic. These communities are located within the Arizona Strip FO along the three major travel routes: U.S. 89A, Arizona 389, and Interstate 15. Adjacent communities outside the Planning Area include Page, Arizona; Kanab, Hurricane, Big Water, Washington, and St. George, Utah; and Mesquite and Bunkerville, Nevada. Many people from these communities rely on natural resources within the Planning Area for their livelihood as well as many forms of outdoor recreation.

This Draft Plan/DEIS was prepared under the authorities of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) for the BLM, the Organic Act of 1916 for the NPS, and numerous other statutory authorities. It was prepared in accordance with BLM planning regulations, 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1610.2(f)(3) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations, 40 CFR 1502.9(a). This document was also prepared in accordance with NPS planning regulations including Director's Order 2 (Park Planning) and Director's Order 12 (Conservation Planning and Environmental Impact Analysis).

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Parashant was established through Presidential Proclamation 7265 on January 11, 2000 and the Vermilion was established through Presidential Proclamation 7374 on November 9, 2000. Individual BLM resource management plans (RMPs) are needed for each National Monument and a NPS general management plan (GMP) is needed for the NPS portion of Parashant to protect Monument objects and the context that supports them in a way that is consistent with the proclamations. A revised RMP is also needed for the Arizona Strip FO. The purpose of this Draft Plan/DEIS is to develop the RMPs and GMP for the three planning areas that will guide future management of the respective areas. NPS plans normally look 15-20 years into the future. BLM plans are evaluated at least every five years and are maintained, amended, and revised as needed.

ISSUES

A planning issue is a major issue, controversy, or dispute regarding management of resources on BLM and NPS lands that can be addressed in a variety of ways. The BLM and NPS initiated formal public scoping on April 24, 2002. Broad public participation including eleven formal public scoping meetings held during May and July 2002 resulted in over 2,000 written comments. The planning team analyzed and categorized these comments into five significant issues and also identified two important management concerns that need to be addressed. As a result, this Draft Plan/DEIS primarily focuses on the five issues and two management concerns and the decisions needed to resolve them. These issues and concerns are as follows:

Issue 1: How will transportation and access be managed?

Rugged and isolated, the Planning Area is one of the largest, un-fragmented stretches of sparsely developed lands in the contiguous United States. The deep canyons of the Colorado River separate the area from the rest of Arizona. Ground vehicle access from the south is impossible due to the Grand Canyon. Three highways cross the northern boundary of the Planning Area. No paved roads extend into the Parashant or other interior sections of the Planning Area, but a network of unpaved roads of various types and conditions offers access. Only a few higher standard unpaved roads extend from the north into the remote southern regions of the Planning Area.

Transportation and access emerged from the scoping process as the primary issue for the public and it is closely tied to the other issues addressed. A network of routes currently exists throughout the Planning Area. Some people believe closing a number of routes and limiting vehicular access would provide the best protection of Monument objects. Others think all existing routes should remain open for recreational and resource use. Route inventories of the two Monuments and the Littlefield area within the Arizona Strip FO were completed and used as baseline data for proposing potential route designations in this document.

Issue 2: How will areas with wilderness characteristics be maintained?

A number of individuals and groups voiced their concern about protecting areas with wilderness characteristics in the Planning Area, specifically in the Monuments. Some felt that additional wilderness designations in the Planning Area would be the best way to protect resources, particularly those identified in the Monument proclamations. Others were not in favor of additional wilderness designations because they felt such actions would prevent the majority of visitors from accessing the remote sections of the Planning Area, especially those that enjoy motorized forms of recreation.

Because of the isolation and sparse development of the Planning Area, some roadless, natural-appearing areas remain. The Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984 created eight wilderness areas in the Planning Area covering 265,869 acres. Areas with wilderness characteristics (naturalness, solitude, and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation) presently occur on the Arizona Strip. The BLM and NPS may maintain or enhance these areas, where they exist. Following recent BLM guidance for assessing and maintaining areas having wilderness characteristics, the BLM and NPS have proposed various options for where, how, and how much these characteristics may be managed within the Planning Area. Only Congress has the authority to designate new wilderness areas.

Issue 3: How will Monument and Arizona Strip FO resources be protected?

The proclamations designating the Monuments identified an array of scientific and historic objects to be protected. There are various ways of achieving this goal and legal mandate, including maintaining acceptable existing conditions, educating visitors, restricting access, setting research priorities, and restoring degraded environmental conditions. In addition to Monument resources, there are valuable natural and cultural resources within the Arizona Strip FO in need of protection. Options for protecting both Monument and Arizona Strip FO resources are identified and assessed in this document. Additional ACECs for protecting natural and cultural resources in the Arizona Strip FO are also presented in this Draft Plan/DEIS.

Issue 4: How will livestock grazing be addressed, particularly on the Monuments?

A number of people identified livestock grazing as an issue during scoping. Comments ranged from eliminating all livestock grazing in the Monuments to supporting all grazing activities in the Planning Area. Those in the middle supported eliminating livestock grazing only in environmentally sensitive areas. Possible options to modify current grazing activities are presented in this Draft Plan/DEIS.

Issue 5: How will people's recreation activities be managed?

Visitors use the Planning Area for a variety of recreation activities including exploring, sightseeing, hiking, backpacking, camping, hunting, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, and

mountain bike riding. Given growth projections for communities in the southwestern U.S. and the increased use of public lands for recreational pursuits, ineffective management of visitor activities is recognized as potentially having profound environmental effects on Monument and Arizona Strip FO lands. The BLM and NPS assessed these possible effects, along with potential user conflicts. Planners propose an appropriate recreation management framework that ensures protection of Monument and Arizona Strip FO resources. They also propose targeting several recreation-tourism strategies to produce beneficial outcomes tied to visitor experiences and activities that take place in a variety of natural and community settings.

Management concern 1: How will degraded ecosystems be restored?

Restoration of degraded ecosystems is an important management concern. Disruption of the natural fire regime has caused the degradation of ecosystems within the Planning Area (e.g., grasslands are being overrun by shrubs, ponderosa pine and pinyon-juniper forests are unnaturally dense, and riparian and other sensitive areas have been invaded by non-native, noxious plants). The selective use of techniques including, but not limited to, mechanized thinning, grazing controls, revegetation with native species, eradication of noxious plants, and use of fire to achieve more natural ecosystem processes can help recover degraded ecosystems. The range of options is detailed in this Draft Plan/DEIS.

Management concern 2: How will the human factors in the Planning Area be considered?

While the focus of management plans tends to be on the area's natural and cultural resources, the human or social factors must also be considered. While remote and largely uninhabited, the Planning Area surrounds a number of small communities largely dependent upon public lands for deriving certain economic, personal, family, community, and environmental benefits. Other small and mid-sized communities and one urban area located just outside the Planning Area's boundaries are also closely connected to the public lands. Rapid population growth in the region will also affect the natural and cultural resources and associated uses on public lands. Public safety is also a concern. The rapid growth and the issues and concerns of the local inhabitants are taken into consideration in this Draft Plan/DEIS.

ALTERNATIVES

NEPA regulations and BLM and NPS planning regulations require the formulation of a reasonable range of alternatives that seek to address the identified issues and management concerns. The BLM and NPS developed five alternatives, including the "No Action" and "Preferred" alternatives. Distinct Preferred Alternatives are proposed for all three planning areas: Parashant, Vermilion, and Arizona Strip FO.

Each alternative varies in both context and intensity of management actions and comprises a set of desired resource or future conditions, special area designations, land use allocations, and the management actions needed to implement the alternative. Each alternative is evaluated to ensure

that it would be consistent with all applicable laws and regulations; BLM and NPS policies and guidelines; the Monuments' purpose, significance, and mission statements; and the Arizona Strip FO's significance and mission statements. The alternatives must also be responsive to the issues and meet the established planning criteria. Each alternative is a complete land use plan that provides a framework for multiple use management of the full spectrum of resources, resources uses, and programs present in the Planning Area.

ALTERNATIVE A: NO ACTION

Alternative A describes the continuation of the management of both Monuments and the Arizona Strip FO under the Arizona Strip RMP (1992, as amended) and the Lake Mead GMP (1986, for the NPS portion of the Parashant), as modified by Interim Management Policy (BLM IM 2000-062 and BLM/NPS Addendum to that IM for Parashant; BLM IM 2002-008 for Vermilion), which implemented the management specifications presented by the Monument proclamations and provided temporary guidance until this Plan is completed. Alternative A serves as a baseline for comparison with the other alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B places an emphasis on minimal human use/influence, and potentially provides the fewest miles of open roads and trails. It focuses on natural processes and other unobtrusive methods for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research; more protection and enhancement of remoteness and primitive recreation; and the least amount of motorized recreation opportunities.

ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C represents an attempt to balance resource protection and human use/influence. It potentially provides a moderate amount of open roads and trails; a combination of natural processes and "hands-on" techniques for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research; and a mix of motorized and primitive recreation opportunities.

ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D places an emphasis on maximum appropriate human use/influence and the widest array of recreation opportunities. It potentially includes the most miles of open roads and trails; focuses on "hands-on" techniques for ecosystem restoration, resource management, and scientific research; and offers the fewest remote settings and the most motorized, least primitive recreation opportunities.

ALTERNATIVE E: PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative E emphasizes minimal human influence and use in the southern and more remote sections of the Planning Area, and more human use/influence in the northern areas and locations adjacent to local communities. It attempts to balance human use/influence with resource protection. Where appropriate, it proposes a combination of management actions including the continuation of natural processes, more hands-on restoration treatment methods, and protection of the remote settings that currently exist in the Planning Area, while allowing for human use and influence.

NPS ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The NPS is required to identify an environmentally preferred alternative, which is the alternative that promotes the national environmental policy as expressed in section 101 of NEPA. The NPS has determined the environmentally preferred alternative only for NPS lands within the Parashant. The BLM is mandated by the National Monument proclamations to protect objects in the Monuments and thus avoid any adverse impacts that would otherwise “impair” such objects, however, the agency is not required to conduct impairment analysis nor identify an environmentally preferred alternative in the DEIS.

In comparison with the other alternatives analyzed, Alternative E best meets the national environmental goals identified in Appendix 4.C, NPS Impairment Analysis. Alternative E provides a high level of protection of natural and cultural resources, while providing for a wide range of beneficial uses of the environment.

POTENTIAL LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS**POTENTIAL LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS FOR PARASHANT**

The BLM and NPS will manage Parashant to protect the Monument objects and resources as identified in Presidential Proclamation 7265 and emphasized in the purpose, significance, and mission statements. Table 1 shows the percentages of the four potential Travel Management Areas (TMAs) under the five alternatives. Table 2 summarizes the potential OHV area and route designations. Table 3 shows the acres of existing designated and existing NPS-proposed wilderness areas. Table 4 shows number of acres that would potentially be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. These four tables summarize decisions proposed by each alternative to resolve the top two public scoping issues regarding access and wilderness. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs; see tables 5 and 14) would be revoked because Monument status now provides protection or changed to a Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA)

TMA	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Rural	NA	0%			
Backways	NA	9%			
Specialized	NA	4%	19%	25%	24%
Primitive	NA	87%	72%	66%	67%

Designation	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
OHV Area Designations (LUP decisions)					
Closed	283,263 acres				
Limited to Designated Routes	765,054 acres				
Route Designations (Potential Implementation Decisions)					
Open and Limited (including Administrative Use)	1,754 miles	1,330 miles	1,551 miles	1,616 miles	1,582 miles
Closed and Rehabilitated	30 miles	444 miles	222 miles	158 miles	191 miles

Area	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Designated Wilderness	95,242 acres				
Proposed Wilderness (NPS only)	188,121 acres				

Area	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Lands to be Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics	NA	411,256 acres	226,394 acres	140,949 acres	210,564 acres

ACEC	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Nampawcap	535 acres	--			
Pakoon	76,014 acres	76,014 acres Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA)		69,083 acres DWMA	Same as Alts B & C
Witch's Pool	279 acres	--			

POTENTIAL LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS FOR VERMILION

The BLM would manage Vermilion to protect the Monument objects and resources as identified in Presidential Proclamation 7374 and emphasized in the purpose, significance, and mission statements. Table 6 shows the percentages of the four potential TMAs under the five alternatives. Table 7 summarizes the potential OHV area and route designations. Table 8 shows the acres of existing designated wilderness areas. Table 9 shows number of acres that would potentially be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. No ACECs currently exist in Vermilion and none are proposed due to the level of resource protection provided by Monument status.

Table 6: Vermilion Travel Management Areas (TMAs: LUP decisions)

TMA	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Rural	NA	0%			
Backways	NA	2%			
Specialized	NA	12%	31%	32%	31%
Primitive	NA	86%	67%	66%	67%

Table 7: Vermilion OHV Area Designations and Potential Route Designations

Designation	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
OHV Area Designations (LUP decisions)					
Closed	89,829 acres				
Limited to Designated Routes	203,863 acres				
Route Designations (Potential Implementation decisions)					
Open and Limited (including Administrative Use)	520 miles	386 miles	446 miles	463 miles	450 miles
Closed and Rehabilitated	41 miles	171 miles	104 miles	87 miles	102 miles

Table 8: Vermilion Designated Wilderness Areas (existing)

Area	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Designated Wilderness	89,829 acres				

Table 9: Vermilion Lands Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics (LUP decisions)

Area	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Lands to be Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics	NA	96,796 acres	40,345 acres	0 acres	36,018 acres

POTENTIAL LAND USE PLAN DECISIONS FOR THE ARIZONA STRIP FO

The BLM would manage the Arizona Strip FO under the concepts of multiple use and sustained yield (FLPMA Sec.302 (a)) and in accordance with the Arizona Strip FO’s significance and mission statements. Table 10 shows the percentages of the four potential TMAs under the five alternatives for the Arizona Strip FO. Table 11 summarizes the potential OHV area and route designations. Table 12 shows the acres of the existing designated wilderness areas. Table 13 shows the number of acres that would potentially be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. Table 14 lists the potential ACECs by alternative. In some cases, ACEC boundaries were refined under the action alternatives because of more accurate information on critical habitats and their location since the Arizona Strip RMP (1992).

Table 10: Arizona Strip FO Travel Management Areas (TMA: LUP decisions)

TMA	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Rural	NA	9%		11%	
Backways	NA		14%		
Specialized	NA	40%	40%	41%	40%
Primitive	NA	37%	35%	34%	35%

Table 11: Arizona Strip FO OHV Area Designations and Potential Route Designations*

Designation	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
OHV Area Designations (LUP decisions)					
Closed	123,100 acres		92,648 acres		90,593 acres
Limited to Designated Routes	282,019 acres	1,888,405 acres	682,153 acres	369,582 acres	1,883,298 acres
Limit to Existing Routes	1,575,140 acres	0 acres	1,204,782 acres	1,511,652 acres	0 acres
Open	803 acres	0 acres	1,481 acres		7,186 acres
Littlefield Sub-region: Route Designations (Potential Implementation decisions)					
Open and Limited	519 miles	430 miles	472 miles	489 miles	474 miles
Closed and Rehabilitated	1 miles	90 miles	48 miles	31 miles	47 miles
St. George Sub-region: Estimated Route Designations (Potential Implementation decisions)					
Open and Limited	627 miles	400-490 miles	440-550 miles		450-560 miles
Closed and Rehabilitated	12 miles	90-110 miles	50-60 miles		40-50 miles
Arizona Strip FO Preliminary Route Network: (Undesignated Sub-regions, all those except Littlefield Sub-region; Potential Implementation decisions)					
Open and Limited	4,569 miles		4,424 miles		
Closed and Rehabilitated	13 miles		234 miles		
Seasonal Closures	8 miles		13 miles		

*Route evaluations would be made within 5 years of ROD for all Arizona Strip FO Sub-regions except Littlefield Sub-region, which was completed in time for this DEIS.

Area	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Designated Wilderness	80,797 acres				

Area	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Lands to be Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics	NA	46,135 acres	77,575 acres*	34,628 acres	34,415 acres
More lands managed to maintain wilderness characteristics are recommended in Alternative C than Alternative B because ACECs provide protection under Alternative B, while less ACEC acreage under Alternative C resulted in a recommendation for more lands to be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics.					

ACEC	Alternative A No Action	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E Preferred
Beaver Dam Slope	51,197 acres	52,753 acres	51,984 acres	51,984 acres	51,984 acres
Black Knolls	--	80 acres	80 acres	--	80 acres
Buckskin	--	160 acres	--	--	--
Clayhole	--	7,362 acres	--	--	--
Coyote Valley	--	776 acres	--	--	776 acres
Fort Pearce	916 acres	5,498 acres	5,498 acres	--	5,498 acres
Gray Points	--	12,881 acres	--	--	--
Hurricane Cliffs	--	23,464 acres	--	--	--
Johnson Spring	2,464 acres	2,058 acres	1,986 acres	--	2,058 acres
Kanab Creek	--	13,146 acres	9,211 acres	--	13,146 acres
Lime Kiln/Hatchett Canyon	--	11,731 acres	--	--	--
Little Black Mountain	241 acres	241 acres	241 acres	241 acres	241 acres
Lone Butte	--	1,900 acres	1,900 acres	--	1,900 acres
Lost Spring Mountain	8,262 acres	17,744 acres	4,431 acres	--	17,744 acres
Marble Canyon	11,012 acres	102,141 acres	11,926 acres	11,926 acres	9,852 acres
Moonshine Ridge	5,095 acres	9,231 acres	2,575 acres	--	9,231 acres
Shinarump	--	3,619 acres	--	--	3,619 acres
Twist Hills	--	1,255 acres	--	--	--
Virgin River Corridor	8,075 acres	2,063 acres	2,063 acres	2,063 acres	2,063 acres
Virgin Slope	39,931 acres	40,287 acres	40,206 acres	40,206 acres	40,206 acres
TOTAL ACRES	127,193 acres	308,390 acres	132,101 acres	106,420 acres	158,398 acres